



October 2008

Safety is an intangible. We can't count it to determine how much we have or how much we need. We can't issue it to Soldiers to keep them safe. Yet every Leader in our Army is responsible for protecting Soldiers, as well as instilling in them a sense of personal responsibility for their safety. What a daunting task.

For the last two years, it has been my distinct honor and privilege to serve as the director of Army safety and commanding general of the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center. In my time here, I have had the opportunity to see, and participate in, the ongoing transformation of Army safety from a reactive culture to a proactive and predictive culture.

Leaders and Soldiers have changed the Army's safety culture. The greatest paradigm shift occurred due to a change in thinking – not in what Soldiers think, but in how they think. You have taken the way we think about safety to the next level. So what have we, as an Army, accomplished to promote safety?

We have made great strides in reaching Soldiers by targeting influencers and making them part of the safety solution. We also targeted safety messages to specific demographic groups and developed user-friendly delivery methods for ease of use. Soldiers are Soldiers 24/7, and, beyond deployments, the bulk of their time is spent outside the oversight of Leaders. Keeping Soldiers safe while off duty is a challenge that requires out-of-the-box thinking and new approaches.

Understanding the influence of spouses and Family members, we expanded our safety team to include those who support the Soldier 24/7. No one knows the habits, thought processes and reactions of a Soldier better than his Family. With the Post-Deployment Family Engagement and BOSS Safety Factor kits, the Army enlisted the support of Soldiers' loved ones. Both kits educate Soldiers and Families, make them aware of potential hazards and empower them to act as a positive safety influence in their Soldier's life.

Peer influence is another powerful tool. On a one-to-one basis, the "looking out" for a battle buddy has kept many a Soldier from harm, both on and off duty. Multiply this effort throughout the Army and you form a force truly comparable to a Band of Brothers. Young Soldiers might have difficulty recognizing risky behavior among their peers until they see the negative results firsthand. The injury or death of a brother in arms is not the way we want Soldiers to learn how to conduct themselves safely.

Army safety entered a new phase by harnessing the combined wisdom from every echelon across the Army and getting that knowledge from those who have it to those who need it. The Army Safety Net forum is one that will grow and prosper through your efforts. The sharing of Best Practices and lessons learned provides a repository of current, relevant safety information for its members to draw upon.

Although I am leaving the Safety Center, I look forward to seeing the continued progress and evolution of Army safety. Credit for safety successes does not go to me or the people in this building. Although we strive to provide the best information and tools, the bottom line is that Soldiers keep Soldiers safe.

I wish all of you the best and **Army Safe is Army Strong!**

WILLIAM H. FORRESTER
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
Commanding